

merely because sunshine and rain, wind and warmth can alone insure its actual growth.

Have we not, over and over again, felt within us the pangs of birth into a higher life, felt the heaving, burning conviction that we might be more than we are, have we not sworn to ourselves that external circumstances shall not bind us down, shall not affect our temper of mind, shall not be allowed to clog and fetter our best capacities. Is there one of us who has not felt as if she *must* find somewhere some great force, some electric thrill that should fill her full of zeal, full of love, and a power of endurance. We look and watch and pray, so we think, but where do we look, for what do we watch, and how do we pray?

All our life is a prayer, more fervent and effectual than any we ever uttered, and our outward lives are its exact and inevitable answer.

We live, if we look deep enough, unto ourselves, and all life is then a failure. We watch diligently, but it is that we may discover exterior strength, exterior wisdom, and we never look within—never realize that, being God's children, we are, as it were, born from His heart, sent into life with His nature as our own possession; with the possibility, with the certainty if we will have it so, of becoming perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. Does this seem dreamy, idealistic, not sufficiently practical? Why should it seem impossible that a child should grow like its father? Why should we think of ourselves as for ever bound to be far, far below Him, in the pattern of whose nature we are made, who breathes into us daily and hourly the breath of His life.

Is it too much for us to grasp this? that we may love our children as He loves them, teach them as He would teach them, be to them just such a friend and guide as He would most like them to have with them. But will the realization that such is our nature be sufficient to insure our being able to live accordingly? We answer that it is only as we give out that which we already have that God can give us any more, only as we lose the wretched self-absorbed existence which we call our own life, that we find life as God thinks of it—only as we yield ourselves, absolutely let ourselves go, that God can lead us to any higher existence.

Let the idea that His very self forms the deepest, the incorruptible basis of our own self, and life looks altogether different, and is henceforth a working with a certainty of success, a daily strengthening of that union with God which is the highest state, the only Heaven, which we can ever know.

B. E. F.

“TOLD TO MYSELF YEARS AGO.”

HAVE you ever in the night, when you were half waking and half sleeping, imagined the huge ball-shaped earth was crushing you? You are but an atom compared with its immensity, and the smallest insect bears a far larger proportion to the orange upon which it happens to alight. You cry aloud for help, feeling crushed and lost, and you wake to find yourself in bed with the moonlight streaming through the uncurtained window. “That is only nightmare,” you say. True, but precisely such is the state of mind in which we find ourselves as we look out upon the world from the point of view permitted by our immediate circumstances.

The great problem of the world overwhelms us, and we fall before it with a sense of powerlessness. Sometimes the ordinary routine of our lives shuts out this questioning and we lull our souls with the fulfilment of daily duties, but the smallest circumstance will recall it to our minds, and once having gained admission it is not to be lightly put aside. From this sense of our own feebleness arises fellow-feeling or sympathy. This morning we ate our breakfast without a thought of anything beyond it. We spoke of what had happened the day before and of what we should do to-day. If we had been reminded we should have been conscious of the restlessness crushed down and hidden away within us, but for the time it was forgotten. A casual observer might have said: “Here is a light-hearted English girl, taking breakfast, and making innocent plans for the day's work. She does not brood over past, present, or future, but takes life as it comes. ‘Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.’ Something sad happens and she is sorry; something pleasant occurs and she is glad. Thus may she continue her life till the end.”

Suddenly there passes the window a girl laden with tin pots, which she is trying to sell. She is very thin, and the east wind pinches her features until they look sharper than usual. Instantly the question arises within the mind of the spectator: “Why should I sit here at my ease while that girl, who is perhaps more deserving, carries that heavy basket through the wind? How dreadful I should think it if I had to do that! How all my friends would

cry out and say I was 'throwing myself away' if I were to go from house to house selling tin pots! Yet no one says she is thrown away. What an injustice! Yet what can I do? We do not want any tin pots, and we send her away. Ought we to buy them in spite of not wanting them? Surely that would be wrong, for we are poor, and were we millionaires it would not be right to spend money on that principle."

Here is another problem. To-day I sit writing while a mother's heart is breaking. Thousands of hearts may be breaking, but this is one that I know of. Her two sons have murdered a cruel father; they are only boys of sixteen and eighteen, and he was a brutal man. Who can take account of the influences that shaped their minds from childhood? who can know whether Love had any chance against Hate, Virtue against Vice, Beauty against Ugliness—Hideousness? Yet the deed was black, and according to the deed they are condemned.

Good men sit in judgment on the lives of these boys, understanding and knowing them as little as the boys know and understand God. Yet this is the law, and the law is a good thing, authorized by all the history of the world, at the same time, how faulty if such things as these occur. The boys were condemned to death, but mercy lives in the hearts of the people, and a great petition was made in their favour. As a rule, the law is inexorable, yet, in consideration of his youth, one boy has his sentence commuted to penal servitude for life. That is to say, instead of dying in life he is to be permitted to live in death. This also is just and right. It would need a total change in the social order of the world before penal servitude could be made any but a living death. Love is life, and that boy by his deed has cut himself off from love and man cannot help him. The other boy, however, must still die. He is his mother's favourite. She is filled with unspeakable anguish. She alone knows how much of the crime was due to the boy himself, how much to the influence of others. She alone loves him. In her misery she is calm. There is yet hope. They have been merciful to one, and they will be merciful to the other. So she telegraphs with the assurance of hope to the authorities who hold his life in their hands. "I earnestly beseech you to spare my son's life." They are simple words, but all the intensity of a mother's love is wrapped up in them, and what anguish they reveal! The hours go on; there is but one day for her to hope in, and the minutes fly so fast. The evening comes and there is still no answer. Then she knows that it is all over, and that her son must die.

Perhaps she goes to him in his cell to bid him good-bye: perhaps she sits alone, *bearing her misery*, dying for him as often as her heart beats, and each time the pain is greater than before. There is this consolation for her: "God does not put upon us more than we are able to bear." She has one other comfort, and this is that Time passes. He will not always be suffering as he is now. This fearful day will end for him. For her it will never end. So long as she has memory will she go through over and over again these hours of anguish. But that does not occur to her. She has yet another comfort. Her boy loved her. It is his love that is piercing her heart, and she had rather it were so. A pierced heart is better to bear than a broken one. To-morrow it will be broken. To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow. It may heal again, but she would rather now that it never healed. She would guard her broken heart jealously for her son's sake, and the dull dead pain of the living son will be bad for the healing. The people knew of this mother's anguish, and spoke of it quietly in their homes. Quietly, sadly, and even reverently, but they did not feel it. Perhaps some conception of it may have flashed across the heart of some thoughtful person in the midst of her social pleasures, and momentarily deprived her of warmth and light. It would be an awful thought even to a stranger, how much more awful to that mother. God will not put upon us more than we can bear, therefore He ordains that the people of this world shall only hold communication with each other according to certain limitations of time, space, and sense. We could not bear to have sympathy with so many sad spirits. We should be beaten to the ground with sadness. Nevertheless, we are constantly striving after greater sympathy and fuller communion. It is that which binds humanity to itself, by causing interchange of understanding between individuals. To it or the lack of it may be traced the highest kinds of joy and sorrow. When the flesh predominates, sympathy is stifled. The more eagerly it is fostered the larger it grows, and the thinner becomes this veil of flesh. Yet Time, and Space, and Circumstances are constantly alleviating the burdens we should otherwise be bound to bear for others. And such a desire, namely, that of bearing others' griefs, is one of disposition, and is born in the child, as I would try to show, it being specially interesting to my readers from such a point of view, but my paper is already far too long, and I can only apologise for having begun at the end, and hope to retrieve my fault next time.